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**SONGS FOR THE  
NEW AGE**



# SONGS FOR THE NEW AGE

BY 

JAMES OPPENHEIM



NEW YORK  
THE CENTURY CO.  
1914

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*Published, October, 1914*

For the term "polyrhythmical poetry," which exactly describes the form of these songs, I am indebted to my friend, the poet, CLEMENT RICHARDSON WOOD.

For arduous and absorbing help—

To the three GLEASONS, LEILA, HELEN AND ARTHUR:

To the two UNTERMEYERS, JEAN and LOUIS:

To MRS. ANNA GLEN STODDARD, DOUGLAS Z. DUTY and the  
devoted CENTURY Co. generally.

**For equal help and other help I dedicate this volume to**

DR. BEATRICE M. HINKLE



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I

WE DEAD



## **BEFORE STARTING**

*IT WAS as if myself sat down beside me,  
And at last I could speak out to my dear friend,  
And tell him, day after day, of the things that were re-  
shaping me.*

*He was not afraid to hear my deepest secrets :  
He was not shocked at my coarseness and trivialities :  
He was prepared for my hours of weakness,—and exal-  
tation.  
Neither did he judge me by any one moment :  
He knew it as a fragment of the impulse that bore me for-  
ward.*

*Yes, these songs were for myself.  
But when they were finished, other selves desired them.*

*Are there still others who will sit close by and listen ?*

*Is it you ? Are you the new friend ?  
May all be told to you ?*



## LET NOTHING BIND YOU

**L**ET nothing bind you:  
If it is Duty, away with it.  
If it is Law, disobey it.  
If it is Opinion, go against it . . .

There is only one Divinity: Yourself.  
Only one God: You . . .

Beware that you worship no false idols:  
Take no crust of manners or whimsical desires,  
No surface-lusts and frailties,  
For the real You hidden down beneath:  
But dig . . .  
Dig with shovel of will and engine of love and passion,  
When the lonely day drags toward the lonelier night,  
When betrayal and malice trip you and throw you on  
yourself,  
Dig down to Self, and set God free . . .

Bethink yourself!  
God is the Life surging forward creatively,  
The swimmer in space whipping up a foam of stars:  
Clear your little channel for him . . .  
He is you . . .

**Let Nothing Bind You**

---

Then, shall a law be greater than God,  
Shall an opinion shrink him,  
A duty stay him?

Forth! Let nothing bind you!

## AS TO BEING ALONE

WHY did you hate to be by yourself,  
And why were you sick of your own company?

Such the question, and this the answer:

I feared sublimity:  
I was a little afraid of God:  
Silence and space terrified me, bringing the thought of  
what an irritable clod I was and how soon death  
would gulp me down . . .

This fear has reared cities:  
The cowards flock together by the millions lest they  
should be left alone for a half hour . . .  
With church, theater and school,  
With office, mill and motor,  
With a thousand cunning devices, and clever calls to  
each other,  
They escape from themselves to the crowd . . .

Oh, I have loved it all:  
Snug rooms, the talk, the pleasant feast, the pictures:  
The warm bath of humanity in which I relaxed and  
soaked myself:  
And never, I hope, shall I be without it—at times . . .

### **As To Being Alone**

But now myself calls me . . .  
The skies demand me, though it is but ten in the morning:  
The earth has an appointment with me, not to be broken . . .  
I must accustom myself to the gaunt face of the Sub-time . . .  
I must see what I really am, and what I am for,  
And what this city is for, and the Earth and the stars in their hurry . . .

To turn out typewriters,  
To invent a new breakfast food,  
To devise a dance that was never danced until now,  
To urge a new sanitation, and a swifter automobile—  
Have the life-surging heavens no business but this?

## CIVILIZATION

**C**Ivilization!

Everybody kind and gentle, and men giving up  
their seats in the car for the women . . .

What an ideal!

How bracing!

Is this what we want?

Have so many generations lived and died for this?

There have been Crusades, persecutions, wars, and  
majestic arts,

There have been murders and passions and horrors  
since man was in the jungle . . .

What was this blood-toll for?

Just so that everybody could have a full belly and be  
well-mannered?

But let us not fool ourselves:

This civilization is mostly varnish very thinly laid  
on . . .

Take any newspaper any morning: scan through  
it . . .

Rape, murder, villainy, and picking and stealing:

The mob that tore a negro to pieces, the men that  
ravished a young girl:

## Civilization

The safe-blowing gang and the fat cowardly promoter  
who stole people's savings...  
Just scan it through: this news of civilization...

Away then, with soft ideals:  
Brace yourself with bitterness:  
A drink of that biting liquor, the Truth...

Let us not be afraid of ourselves, but face ourselves  
and confess what we are:  
Let us go backward a while that we may go forward:  
This is an excellent age for insurrection, revolt, and  
the reddest of revolutions...

## SIN

**S**IN! sin! sin!  
I am sick of your ever worrying what is good  
and bad,  
What is moral and sinful...

Go find what you really are...  
Are you a cave-man underneath your civilized crust?  
Or a sensualist or a glutton?  
Are you a prostitute deep beneath your enforced monogamy? ...  
What is it really you want?

Better then to be what you are:  
Better that, than to live a lie: to be a sweet conformer  
on the surface,  
A respectable citizen and prompt voter,  
And yet ever wallowing in secret shame and in sense of  
sinning!

The real sin is in being divided against yourself:  
In wanting one thing and doing another:  
For after all you are betraying yourself every moment:  
Every moment what you really are is leaking through  
in some detestable manner...

## Sin

Your desire for women becomes a smutty joke:  
Your desire for power becomes bad temper to your  
inferiors:  
Your desire for freedom comes out in mean irrita-  
tions . . .

Perchance, though, you fear the civilized world would  
crumble if you let yourself go?  
Why, it has already crumbled so far as you are con-  
cerned . . .  
Do you think that such a dark and oozing creature is  
civilized?

I can tell you a better way . . .  
Be what you are . . .  
Then you can take your desires and lift them and har-  
ness them . . .

(Men that can harness Niagara can harness gluttony)  
The murderer becomes the deft-fingered surgeon:  
The child that models smut becomes the sculptor:  
The luster after women becomes the music-shaping  
poet . . .

If you are really so anxious to contribute something to  
civilization,  
Go, and contribute a Man . . .

## SELF

ONCE I freed myself of my duties to tasks and people and went down to the cleansing sea . . .  
The air was like wine to my spirit,  
The sky bathed my eyes with infinity,  
The sun followed me, casting golden snares on the tide,  
And the ocean—masses of molten surfaces, faintly gray-blue—sang to my heart . . .

Then I found myself, all here in body and brain, and all there on the shore:  
Content to be myself: free, and strong, and enlarged:  
Then I knew the depths of myself were the depths of space,  
And all living beings were of those depths (my brothers and sisters)  
And that by going inward and away from duties, cities, street-cars and greetings,  
I was dipping behind all surfaces, piercing cities and people,  
And entering in and possessing them, more than a brother,  
The surge of all life in them and in me . . .

## **Sel**

---

So I swore I would be myself (there by the ocean)  
And I swore I would cease to neglect myself, but  
    would take myself as my mate,  
Solemn marriage and deep: midnights of thought to be:  
Long mornings of sacred communion, and twilights of  
    talk,  
Myself and I, long parted, clasping and married till  
death.

### WHEN IN THE DEATH OF LOVE.

WHEN in the death of love,  
The lovers part,  
With saddened quiet in their eyes,  
And brief low words,  
They do not wonder at the autumn's dying,  
Nor at the fall of leaves in the late wind,  
Nor wooded hills in winter.

A sadness steeps the sky,  
A grayness glistens in the air,  
And the Earth's bosom is barren, bleak and brown...  
When in the death of love  
The lovers part.

## WHERE LOVE ONCE WAS

W HERE love once was, let there be no hate:  
Though they that went as one by night and day  
Go now alone,  
Where love once was, let there be no hate.

The seeds we planted together  
Came to rich harvest,  
And our hearts are as bins brimming with the golden  
plenty:  
Into our loneliness we carry granaries of old love . . .

And though the time has come when we cannot sow  
our acres together  
And our souls need diverse fields,  
And a tilling apart,  
Let us go separate ways with a blessing each for each,  
And gentle parting,  
And let there be no hate,  
Where love once was.

---

## LOVE AND MARRIAGE

THE LOVE of man for woman and woman for man,  
It is not often love . . .

When the married couple kiss do they drink the music  
of each other's souls,  
Are they moved to unspeakable reverence and adora-  
tion,  
Would they renounce the world for the good of the  
beloved?

No, kisses are become to them a routine and a duty:  
They find each other's bodies at midnight as they find  
breakfast in the morning:  
And they fill the idle hours with games, shows, rides  
and liquor,  
All to escape from one another . . .

I have thoughts of a love that might be;  
Of a love that is the tender caress of forehead and  
cheeks with barely lingering hands:  
Of a love that opens the skies at midnight for silent  
flight,  
Flight far, with wings, in one another's arms . . .

## **Love and Marriage**

---

These lovers shall mean as much to each other as they  
mean to themselves:

Their tenderness shall melt down irritations:

Their passion shall surcharge tasks with meaning . . .

Not alone shall the man find God in himself,  
But in the beloved shall he find him, and in the sight  
of the beloved shall he adore him . . .

## ONE WHO LOVED

I HAVE heard of a great love:  
Of a woman who lived behind the partition in a  
lawyer's office:  
For four years she was hidden with this married man:  
She never went out, day or night:  
She sat very still, lest a client might overhear her . . .  
She sewed and read and translated and waited her  
lover . . .  
His foot had a running sore: tenderly she bathed it.  
He was no longer young: no, she was in love with him-  
self . . .  
And when he died, and she was discovered, she held  
up her head and said to us:  
"Had I to do it over again: thus would I do it."  
  
Ah, men and women that I know,  
How many of you really love each other?

### THE HAUNTED HEART

THE haunted heart beseeches me:  
It cries to my soul: "Winter has come . . .  
With what a withering the wind blows!  
And the gray twilight is bleak, though the lamplighter  
opens blossoms of white in the air . . .

"Wanderer, return!  
Go to where the hearth is warm and the faces crowd:  
Hearken to the calling of the children!"

So the haunted heart beseeches me,  
But from my heart I turn my face  
And continue my lonely journey into the sombre dark.

### THE CLINGING ARMS

PUSH off the clinging arms!  
There is only death in this strangle-hold; even  
if we call it love...  
The mother who cares too much for her child,  
Or the husband for his wife,  
They are keeping sheltered and confined what should  
be free and hardy, toughened for battle!

Nay, there is no real love in this binding:  
It is more often a sense of waste and futility,  
And a fierce bickering and quarreling...

Shake free!  
Know love in freedom: know love in separation:  
Give the soul its own self to support it, and take off  
your arms!  
Do honor to the divinity of another human being  
By trusting its power to go alone.

## PROPERTY

**M**Y LIFE does not belong to me:  
Neither does it belong to any other person.

Otherwise this chatter and comfort would be sufficient:  
This ingrowing family life would be gracious and  
excellent:  
This ease of the rut would suit for a lifetime.

But no: Earth and the heavens are in growth: and the  
sap is climbing through me:  
I must go the way of the skies:  
I must feel the star-tendencies and give myself to them:  
My life belongs to creation, as a hand belongs to a  
body.

If then, my day's work done,  
Time is allowed for gossip and the choke of families,  
Gladly will I take my ease, and smoke, and talk:  
But I shall not forget the business of the stars just  
above the roof of the room.

## THE MORNING STARS

**O**F OLD the psalmist said that the morning stars sing  
together,  
He said the rocks do sing and that the hills rejoice . . .

There be ten million ears in this little city alone . . .  
How many have heard the rocks, the hills and the  
stars?  
Not I, not I, as I hurried uptown and downtown!  
I heard the wheels of the cars, the chatter of many  
mouths,  
I was in the opera house when it seemed almost to burst  
with music,  
I heard the laughter of children, and the venom of  
mixed malicious tongues,  
But neither the stars I heard nor the muted rocks nor  
the hills!

David, of Asia, I do hear now . . .  
I do hear now the music of the spheres—  
I have stepped one step into the desert of Loneliness,  
I have turned my ear from the world to my own  
self . . .  
I have paused, stood still, listened.

## THE SLAVE

THEY set the slave free, striking off his chains . . .  
Then he was as much of a slave as ever.

He was still chained to servility,  
He was still manacled to indolence and sloth,  
He was still bound by fear and superstition,  
By ignorance, suspicion, and savagery . . .  
His slavery was not in the chains,  
But in himself . . .

They can only set free men free . . .  
And there is no need of that:  
Free men set themselves free.

## THE LAUGHER

STUCK in the mire of many philosophies,  
Quicksands of creeds and codes,  
I would have come to nothing if my soul had not  
laughed at me . . .

“Stupid!” he said,  
“They speak of what *they* want: but what do *you* want?  
Go and question yourself!  
Surely the oak does not put forth apples,  
Nor the wild-rose many-eyed excellent potatoes!”

Thanks, laugher!  
I’m off now down the long road of myself,  
The way is clear: I could shout in this wind of freedom,  
Even as the sun rejoices that it sheds natural sunbeams,  
And the sea that it runs down the tides.

## PATTERNS

WOULD you lay a pattern on life and say, thus  
shall ye live?  
I tell you that is a denial of life:  
I say that thus we pour our spirits in a mould, and they  
cake, and die . . .

Thus, indeed, we become the good and the respectable:  
Thus we neither lie nor steal, and we commit neither  
murder nor adultery:  
But truly when I look at the holy ones, the pillars of  
society,  
I am fain to go and get drunk or go talk with publicans  
and sinners . . .

I want to go to the man who quickens me:  
I want the gift of life; the flame of his spirit eating  
along the tinder of my heart:  
I want to feel the floodgates within flung open and the  
tides pouring through me:  
I want to take what I am and bring it to fruit.

Quicken me, and I will grow:  
Touch me with flame, and the blossoms will open and  
the fruit appear . . .

## **Patterns**

---

Call forth in me a creator, and the god will answer . . .  
And then if I commit what you call a sin,  
Better so . . .  
It will not be a sin: it will be a mere breaking of your  
patterns:  
For the only sin is death, and the only virtue to be  
altogether alive and your own authentic self.

### THE PARADOX

THE wheeling heavens, at this moment wheeling:  
The self-absorbed crowds in the street . . .  
Gigantic paradox!  
If they saw the sublimity of which they are part  
They would hurry and hide, like children afraid of the  
dark.

## WAITING

WHY am I restless?  
Why do I feel I cannot wait here ten minutes?  
From what am I fleeing?

I think I am trying to run from myself:  
For the moment I sit still my mind propounds ques-  
tions,  
And presents problems . . .

What of it?  
Let it ask its fiercest question: I will listen patiently.  
Let it speak its worst: I can endure it.

Really, I have been fleeing from God:  
For as soon as I bide with myself, I find that I am  
biding with Nature:  
I am at peace with Earth and the Night and the people  
around me:  
For all life is one:  
And the nearest jet of it is right here in this body of  
mine.

## THE DESCENDING HOUR

O MY most bitter mood,  
O descending hour, plunge in the crater of myself,  
And steep decline among flames, faces, torments, darkness!

I had forgotten—  
I had forgotten the madness of life—  
The blood-drinker, Time, was forgotten, the love-parter, Death,  
And those gibbering ghosts, my ancestors.

Horror bore us: as if the gorge of Night rose, becoming worlds:  
And on the inhospitable shores of the planet we were born,  
And driven before the elements, and whipped, falling, to death . . .

We rear cities, crowding them with lights:  
We try to forget with shows and busy toil:  
But under it all the tide, the tide bearing us out.

## SICKLINESS

HERE is strength, here,  
In my own breast:  
If I go whining to the Earth and the stars,  
And beseech help of a sweet invisible one in the air  
about me,  
Let me also go where I belong:  
Among children and invalids.

Off with this habit of sickness!  
Let me puff out my cheeks and blow away the vapors  
of sadness and downheartedness!  
The erect pride shall beget a manner of triumph:  
And the bugle of that manner shall call out the regi-  
ments of my tented soul.

## ÆSTHETES

THE æsthetes read and wax contemptuous or enthusiastic . . .  
How many of them live the thing they praise,  
And run from the thing they blame?

## THE PURE

HERE was a man called pure,  
Because neither with hand nor tongue nor visible  
act  
He committed any sin.

His friend took him and peeled him like an onion,  
Stripped off, not the clothes of the body, but the  
clothes of the soul,  
And came at last to the dark and secret closet . . .  
What did he find?

He found what was in himself and in you and me:  
For the sculptor that thumbed so patiently the clay  
of earth until it was this radiant rosy flesh,  
This eyed and tongued body of man and woman,  
That sculptor, Life, shaped our bodies out of the  
bodies of the beasts,  
And even so he shaped our souls and hearts out of the  
souls and hearts of the beasts . . .  
Yea, the babe new-born is, in all save the open mind,  
(That curious creator within us)  
A little crying animal desiring milk from its  
mother . . .

## **The Pure**

---

So the friend found in the pure one the deposit of the dead millenniums:  
But alive there: a jungle and swamp of ancestral beasts and savages...  
Chaos of the earth at creation: the flowing of fires and floods, and the smokes of the craters...  
Yea, the bloody black history of man was locked in that breast.

He found even hell: the nether region of torment:  
Hot cravings, dark lusts, the maniac and the slayer,  
The foul breath of the ravening betrayer of women,  
the steaming hand of the persecutor,  
And all things named "carnal"...

And at the gate of this deep Hell he found the little devil of Fear pushing back the immortal Sins,  
And the little devil of Respectability shuddering that the Burning Ones might escape,  
And the devil of Horror barring the way to the convicts...

So the friend said to him:

"Come, man of Purity, scourge of the adulterers!  
A word, unblemished One!

"I see that you are good through fear,  
And not because of your nature...  
I see that you are stainless because you want to be respectable,

## The Pure

---

| And because it is easier to succeed in the world if  
people think well of you...

"You may have fooled the world and you may have  
fooled yourself:

But Nature is never fooled...

She leaks through in her own mysterious way.

She plagues a liar until the whole spirit itches...

For what makes you so smug and dull and such a dead  
weight on your friends:

And why do you breathe invisible corruption about  
you,

And remind one of slime and dung and detestable  
things?

Why does the hearty sinner send joy upon me, and  
quicken my heart,

So that I throw up my hat and applaud the freshness  
of life,

While you, O Unspotted One, eat into my day like a  
canker of ennui?

You breed a hate of virtue and a loathing of good-  
ness...

"Ha, it is the hidden hell breathing through you:  
It is the smothered beast radiating his foulness through  
your flesh:

It is the adultery in the heart which is less honest and  
more evil than the adultery in the act...

(Did not the same truth-teller speak of the whitened  
sepulchre?)

### **The Pure**

---

“Come, you are not only a sinner, but a coward as well:  
For the sinner of courage goes honestly and commits  
    his sin:  
And so rids himself of this pus, and cleanses the air  
    for us,  
And makes us glad, even as a thunderstorm that puri-  
    fies a muggy day . . .

“So, a word, friend (I was never so real a friend as  
    now, flaying you alive!)  
The things you damn in others are the things that are  
    really you:  
Go, know yourself: turn your eyes inward: walk hum-  
    bly into your hell:  
Wear every scarlet stripe of those blood-red flames:  
And then wait the miracle . . .

“For behold! Sin? Not so: no, but the human . . .  
Thus are we all . . .  
Shall we say Nature is foul and corrupt?  
Shall we say the receding road of a million million  
    years down the past  
Was all a mistake, though it is we that emerge from  
    that road?  
Shall we damn our Mother, whose nimble fingers are  
    ages that tenderly shaped us?  
Shall we curse the cyclone that whirled up from the  
    sun and in fierce cycles begot Earth and her  
    children,

## **The Pure**

---

And now sweeps through us, crying out to us to  
create?  
Nay, under the crust of our minds lie the weltering  
universes  
Jetting up power enough to fill the skies with new  
stars . . .

“But, lo, on the crust, and over the welter,  
Sits a god: the creator: you:  
And more than the hills and the seas give you granite  
and steam  
The self within offers raw powers and materials . . .  
Take this desire of women and shape of the passion a  
poem or a city,  
Take this lusting to kill and conquer the heavens with  
wings,  
Take these hungering beasts in your breast and beget  
civilizations!  
What you call Hell, is merely unharnessed power!  
And if you touch these red devils with love and hearty  
good will  
Behold as they lift their eyes, the faces of gods . . .

“Smother not the storm of Life in the soul:  
But open the way, and shape it, blowing from your  
hands and lips:  
Be a god using the storm as your own wings . . .  
The lifter of your spirit!

### **The Pure**

---

“Then, indeed, you will cease to condemn them who  
have not the guidance to transform their powers,  
But live as in nature,  
Then, indeed, you will go sit with publicans and sin-  
ners,  
And understand and enjoy them.”

—  
who  
rs,  
sin-

### ABIDE THE ADVENTURE

**N**EITHER from the woe,  
    Nor from the war,  
Think ye to escape . . .  
It helps nothing that ye shut your eyes, oh, cloistered  
    cowards and gilded idlers!  
For neither shall cushion nor buffet ease the sharp  
    shock of life,  
Neither shall delicate music in hushed hotels drown out  
    the roar of the battling streets . . .  
Neither shall wingéd wheels carry you away to the  
    place of peace . . .  
How can ye go from yourselves, deluded ones?

Make but a world of rest:  
Swifter than striking lightning  
The Aladdin of the soul builds in the heart  
A world of unresting hell . . .  
And, oh ye shunners of war, ye are gruelled in a war  
    of the spirit,  
In a battle of nerves and blood-vessels and the ghost-  
    haunted brain,  
And the death of delight . . .

### **Abide The Adventure**

---

Hence, whip ye to battle:  
Live ye to the uttermost:  
Abide the adventure.

## TAKE PHYSIC, POMP!

I WAS as a sieve for the wind this morning:  
I hurried to be out of it:  
Zero weather, merciless and gray . . .

Yet there on the pave beside the park rail,  
Leaning toward the brown frozen grass,  
Stood one so thinly clad,  
He bit on a wad of paper between his teeth to cover  
his lips and nose,  
His jacket was stuffed with newspaper, his shoes with  
rags . . .  
He was all puffy red and bleary and huddled . . .

At the same time he was throwing bits of stale bread  
to some sparrows . . .

Curious!  
Was it the extremity of his suffering made him a  
brother of life?  
Ran the pain so deep that he felt even for birds?

I think of Lear's cry: "Take physic, pomp!"

## IF IT COMES TO THIS

**B**ITTER, bitter,  
A night that kills with a perishing wind,  
The cold soaks the tight houses, fighting the fires . . .

The air about the street-lamps is blue with cold,  
The moon's a disc of ice frozen to the sky,  
The streets are whipped clean of people: the wanderer  
blows into the nearest doorway . . .

Yet before the concert hall  
The chauffeur sat two hours in the rich woman's limousine  
While she fed her soul with delicious music indoors . . .  
The policeman passing thought that he slept, and  
shook him . . .  
He did not sleep: he was dead of the eating cold . . .

And what is our Art, and our skyscraping Commerce  
and Traffic,  
And what our steam-heated Civilization,  
And what this worry over our tiny Souls,

### **If It Comes To This**

---

Yea, what this wealth pulled from the Earth by  
machines and so great that we waste it,  
If it all comes to this?

Benign Brotherhood, do we really want you?  
Or are you an empty word to cover our feeble spirits?

### THE WEAK

EVER the same—this love of the weak.

The wind was so bitter that the Italian mother and  
child were blown back at the corner . . .

The little boy cried, whimpering against the world . . .  
Quickly the mother took her shabby furs from her  
neck

And wrapped them about her son . . .  
Then they went on, both of them content.

We pity ourselves when we pity the frailties of others,  
We see ourselves in the beggar or the murderer sen-  
tenced to be killed;  
And when we soothe and heal another we are merely  
laying gentle hands upon our own dark trouble . . .

That which ye do for the least of these,  
Ye do for me . . .  
Who cannot say this, loving the weak?

### THE HAG

THE old hag sat on the park bench, picking her  
teeth:  
Her hat was askew over her stiffened bangs:  
Her skirts were bunched together: her shoes broken.

What did Spring mean to her?  
What meaning in the new grass blades and the cloudy  
blue of the skies?  
How did the slow-rising love-hymn of the Earth sound  
in her ears?  
What mate in the world for her?

I passed by, young and in power:  
But I wished for a moment I could be inside her head,  
And see what else the world means.

## PRIESTS

PRIESTS are in bad odour,  
And yet there shall be no lack of them . . .  
The skies shall not lack a spokesman,  
Nor the spirit of man a voice and a gesture . . .

Not garbed nor churched,  
Yet, as of old, in loneliness and anguish,  
They shall come eating and drinking among us,  
With scourge, pity, and prayer.

## WHERE BIDES BROTHERHOOD?

**W**HERE bides Brotherhood,  
Where, but within?

Self is the world-container,  
Pyramid of eternity whereof my body is infinitesimal  
apex . . .  
Whereof all bodies are the apices . . .  
But Self is thyself just the same as myself.

So never shall charity avail me,  
And never kind words nor the urging of excellent laws,  
Nor warring for weighty politics, nor voting with the  
oppressed . . .  
Only the going to Self is a going to my brothers . . .  
Only walking deep in to the heart of love is walking  
out to the darkened cities of men . . .

What help to meet the stranger from the outside?  
How pierce his mask?  
No, I dive under him into the stream beneath,  
Then rise through him, and dwell in his deep heart.

## THE ROCK

THE soul is an abyss,  
The crowd is a rock.

Give me then the dive into the bottomless pit,  
Thence to draw power and the strength of spacious  
life . . .  
But let me not drown in those waters where madness  
lies,  
Let me not drown like Nietzsche, scioner of mobs . . .

No, risen again to the surface,  
I will go set my feet upon the rock.

## ACTION

THERE comes a moment when to believe is not  
    enough,  
When to go on merely feeling and thinking is inex-  
    cusable . . .  
There comes a moment when we must out and act.

For at the last  
We must pass thought through matter, giving it flesh.  
That is the act of creation, that only Life:  
That is what the world means with its physical beauty,  
And what our bodies mean, projected, solid . . .  
Passion has become lips and arms, and the billowing  
    seas . . .

Many scholars have died of this malady,  
Many dreamers have rotted in cloistered safety,  
Much of greatness has passed, still-born . . .

## BROTHERHOOD

If you want to find your brothers,  
Find yourself...  
You are not a person; you are a race...

What we see of you is a ray of light emanating from  
the hidden skies within you...  
In those skies humanity dwells...  
Enter them; find your brothers...

You shall find infinite love:  
You shall be all you see:  
Communion with the grass and the sea-waves shall be  
no harder than with human beings...  
St. Francis knew this: preaching to the birds.

Not alone in division of food and comfort,  
Not alone in bare Justice (long needed, the unescapa-  
ble duty of our age)  
Not in these only shall Brotherhood come...

No, not until you go the ancient way;  
Way of Buddha, Jesus and Isaiah,  
The long long journey, farther than sun from earth,  
(So near, such heavens away) to your own Soul,  
Shall dawn benign Brotherhood.

## TRANSFIGURATIONS

WE SPAT on the dirt and the flesh  
Through two thousand years of soul-sickness . . .

And so the poor have been with us,  
And the good people have been vile lies, holy and  
stinking . . .

Enough of this!  
Glory is dirt converted, and magic is flesh trans-  
figured . . .

Not to the heavens we pray,  
And not to a white-bearded God, tottering and old:  
From no far world does majesty descend.

But when we pray,  
We pray to our own selves:  
To no stars outward, but to one heart inward:  
The dusty despicable Self on the top  
To the sea-vast world-swelling Self underneath . . .  
And in that Self what is not?

There yawn the seven Hells seen of Dante,  
There rise the circling Paradises to the sun,

### **Transfigurations**

---

There in the brimstone of lust, and fire of greed, and  
ice of stormy passion,  
Purification goes on, and the making of all that is  
high . . .

Go kneel then in the pit of your flesh, in the darkness  
of the dirt:  
There the wings grow and the desire for the sky,  
And the fury creative . . .

Out of the noise of the world the musician shapes his  
sun-bursts of music,  
Out of the loathsome dirt the sculptor moulds his  
shapes, shining, alive,  
And out of the raw desire of man for woman arise  
Winged love and the dream of brotherhood and cries  
of the martyrs . . .

Look to the flesh: go wipe out poverty:  
Then hell will be emptier.

## THE MILLENNIUM

A SK for no mild millennium:  
Our world shall never be nobler than its in-  
habitants:  
Never be nobler than you and I, blind brother.

What is this world but our secret natures opened and  
stamped into cities?  
The smoke of the mills is only the vapor of our soft-  
coal hearts:  
The slums of the poor and the drab palaces of the rich  
are the filth of our spirits:  
The curses of the world are but the unleashed beast  
in us roaming the streets.

Here and there is one shining among us:  
He is not a conqueror of tools, but a conqueror of self:  
He strides like a sun in the crowds, and people are glad  
of him:  
He did not wait for a millennium to perfect him:  
He did not see the need of sanitation and pure food to  
help him to a soul:  
He wrestled with the antagonist in his own breast and  
emerged victorious.

### **The Millennium**

---

Give us a hundred million such, and a greater world is  
upon us:  
But give us only a perfect world, and it shall be a  
coat that misfits us.  
Stagnation and sin shall be there as surely as they are  
deep in our hearts.

## FUNERALS

ONE would think the dead were burying the living,  
not the living the dead,  
The way we hold funerals . . .  
Bah! my heart sickens!

Please, when I die, know that I am very well able to  
care for myself,  
And that the journey is mine, not yours:  
Then take the refuse I left behind me  
And quickly and quietly burn it up.

## AT FORTY

IT WAS you, the glowing youth that went forth  
Conquering the world with laughter,  
And radiantly running after visions.

Now forty years lie on you like a frost:  
Disillusionment is in the very handshake you proffer  
me:  
And a crust of habits and troubles has overlaid you.

You call death your friend, and think he is long in  
coming:  
You have lost faith in life and in your own true self:  
And the failure of your work enfeebles your ambition  
and effort.

See deeper:  
The real you is that glowing youth:  
Pierce back to him.

## THE BLAME

YOU blame yourself:  
You writhe with remorse because you make  
trouble for your dear ones:  
And the love you give them seems but the mother of  
tears and sighs.

But are you to blame?  
Or is it the human predicament?  
You are unhappy yourself: who caused it?  
Do you not know it is hard for people to live together?

The sun in summer by merely swimming through the  
skies  
Sends down a scorching heat:  
Shall the sun therefore go weeping through the heavens,  
Remorseful and miserable?  
Is it the sun's fault that we cannot bear his rays?

## CRIME

**H**A! YOU count it horrible that the murder was  
committed,  
That the man was killed.

What ails you?  
Is it the thought of what happened to the body,  
Or the imagined terror of the victim?

And yet, much nearer home, and quite invisible,  
With sharp knife of words, glances, and even kisses,  
A slow still murder is proceeding;  
And the victim has, not minutes, but years of torment.  
Far more horrible than any murder of the body  
Is this murder of the life.

Do you guess whom I mean?  
Yes, it is you.

## THE CHILDREN

IS THAT your reason? The children? Their future?

Tut! blow off the foam of sentimentality and piffle!  
Look through the depths beneath.

Somehow your child had to come and take the risk of  
being yours:  
The risk was real . . .

Perhaps you were poor, and his environment dirty and  
dark:  
Or you were bad-tempered or lecherous:  
Or you were the opposite of his nature and would  
oppose his growth.

Now, tell me: what is his future to be?  
Built on a father who is a lie and evasion?  
Or strong and true?

Is that last not a risk worth taking?  
Is it not part of the risk of his being born your son?  
Truly, sparing him pain may be the very way of spoiling  
his nature:

## **The Children**

---

Give a child credit for being as human as you are:  
Let him share the great fight:  
He will thank you in the end.

## TOO HUMAN

**H**OW many are strong enough to reject riches?  
Not I, not I!

And who can flee from the poisoned breath of flattery?  
And who can escape from the friends that shield his  
weakness?  
And who can put away slothfulness and the lure of  
women?  
Not I, not I!

We are too human, we little ones!  
Praised be the hostile world  
And the scourge of need.

### **3ottings**

#### **NEW-BORN**

**D**EATH and birth dog us:  
I died only a few days ago:  
Now, new-born, I send up a cry of delight at creation:  
The world and I are so unstudied fresh . . .

#### **LISTEN**

**G**O A little aside from the noise of the world:  
Go near to yourself . . .  
Listen . . .  
*Ab, music, pulse-beats of Life, whispers of Death !  
They were there all the time like a brook that is under the  
ground.*

## 3ottings

### *THE SEA IS ITSELF*

*T*HE sea is itself: it does not fear to be calm or stormy,  
gray or gold, loud or soft—  
Why have I feared to be like the sea—myself?

### *THE FLAME*

*W*HAT is the tiny flame of my match that gives itself  
so freely that soon it is consumed and vanishes?

3otting8

*THE SEA WHISPERS*

*THE sea whispers to me of women because I am lonely  
for the love of women.  
Now I hear the luring whispers of girls in the rustling  
surf—  
Now bass of men's voices furious, urgent, and strong.*

*BREAST OF EARTH*

*BREAST of earth, with all these sea-worn stones,  
Tumbled together, gray, purple and brown, red and  
green and white,  
What beauty within you . . .*

## 3ottings

*SHH!*

*THE sea put a finger of foam on its lips of waves,  
Saying, "Sbb!" saying, "Husb!"*

*I that was vexed and unquiet,  
Heard, and was soothed.*

## *TWO FACES*

*I SAW the unwritten face of the child  
Beside the mother's trouble-writ face.*

## MASTERS

I TAKE as my master, not you nor myself nor the  
past:  
But Life.

Every chain I break is for the sake of the eternal irons:  
I snap the links that bind me to you and you:  
I crack away from the chaining appetites of myself:  
And surrender to the manacles of the procreant  
Power of the world.

Then am I a careful instrument used ruthlessly:  
Quickly may the tool break and be shattered:  
The risk is enormous:  
But better to be a brief tool in the hands of Power  
Than be a weighty long-lived instrument rusting in  
your hands, my human masters.

### TO THE PERILOUS OPEN

WE, THAT are the very waters of change,  
Wearied, seek the unchanging:  
We want a rock under our feet.

A rock of God, a rock of institutions,  
A rock of indissoluble marriage:  
The absolute.

And it does not matter if the rock has a nest of snakes  
upon it,  
And is slimy and slippery, betraying our feet...  
There will we stand, there will we suffer: our Rock!

But I—I will to my own, to the kin of my spirit:  
I, the waters of change, will give myself to Life, that  
sea in flux,  
To the vast variety, to the perilous open, to the sting-  
ing salt:  
Strength must one have to swim: and I shall grow  
strong with the sea.

## BEREFT

WHO can measure the agony of man?  
There seem too many of us:  
Too many millions: too great a multitude of needy  
beings:  
Too myriad-hearted a need...  
What sun, what rain shall feed this human grass of the  
Earth?

Alas! in the crowd I come and go, confused and  
wandering:  
I cannot see a meaning in the tumult and disaster:  
I cannot guess a triumphant purpose in this pinch of  
man-dust on this hidden planet...  
As the street-crowds run from my bereavéd spirit,  
So crowds of the stars rush past, heedless of our  
trouble...  
Yet it goes on:  
Yet we have clothes on our back and food for our  
mouth,  
And a thousand creeds pronounce their rival revela-  
tions,  
And stout-hearted we go forth to fight in the morning  
And lay us down at night, spent, spent...

## **Bereft**

---

All day they carry out the dead from the city, and all  
day the cry of the new-born echoes behind the  
walls . . .

Youth is broken on the streets and the lovers part and  
the married hate and long for an ending:  
Child against mother, son against father, the strong  
at the throats of the weak:  
And every generation the annihilator of the generation  
that brought it to birth . . .

Havoc and disaster,  
And a going down to graves and a last dissolution:  
And the bleak winds of November blowing up from  
the seas,  
And the Earth dismantled and dying, dying . . .

I that found thee in my soul and in the radiance of the  
sun,  
Hide now alone, bereft: cut off:  
A few pounds of human trouble:  
A little wisp of darkness:  
A fleck of shadow on immensity.

## TASTING THE EARTH

**I**N A DARK hour, tasting the Earth.

As I lay on my couch in the muffled night, and the rain  
    lashed my window,  
And my forsaken heart would give me no rest, no  
    pause and no peace,  
Though I turned my face far from the wailing of my  
    bereavement...  
Then I said: I will eat of this sorrow to its last shred,  
I will take it unto me utterly,  
I will see if I be not strong enough to contain it...  
What do I fear? Discomfort?  
How can it hurt me, this bitterness?

The miracle, then!  
Turning toward it, and giving up to it,  
I found it deeper than my own self...  
O dark great mother-globe so close beneath me...  
It was she with her inexhaustible grief,  
Ages of blood-drenched jungles, and the smoking of  
    craters, and the roar of tempests,  
And moan of the forsaken seas,

### **Tasting The Earth**

---

It was she with the hills beginning to walk in the shapes  
of the dark-hearted animals,  
It was she risen, dashing away tears and praying to  
dumb skies, in the pomp-crumbing tragedy of  
man . . .  
It was she, container of all griefs, and the buried dust  
of broken hearts,  
Cry of the christs and the lovers and the child-stripped  
mothers,  
And ambition gone down to defeat, and the battle  
overborne,  
And the dreams that have no waking . . .

My heart became her ancient heart:  
On the food of the strong I fed, on dark strange life  
itself:  
Wisdom-giving and sombre with the unremitting love  
of ages . . .

There was dank soil in my mouth,  
And bitter sea on my lips,  
In a dark hour, tasting the Earth.

## RENUNCIATION

H AVE we given up thy spell, Renunciation?  
Do we dream that we can be born without first  
dying?  
That joy comes with no pain?

Once the world heard thy lips crying: "Renounce!  
renounce!"  
Oh, calm-eyed wingéd one that hovers near us . . .  
But now they preach of the unalloyed pleasures of  
the faithful,  
And of the gains that fly to the needy soul all effortless!

Yet do I know that desiring my dearest friend,  
I did not have him till I went from him,  
Lonely for his sake through a month of days . . .

Yet do I know how songs are written . . .  
The singer moves away from faces,  
He goes from blessed comfort to cold agony,  
Putting away the man in him to be the poet . . .

Yet do I know of a mother (so of all mothers)  
Who could not have the child biding in her womb

### **Renunciation**

---

Till, shrieking, she had given him up,  
And from her body the small new life was sundered . . .  
Then in her arms she held him: he was hers . . .

## WE DEAD

WHEN from the brooding home,  
The silent immemorial love-house,  
The belovéd body of the mother in her travail,  
Naked, the little one comes and wails at the world's  
bleak weather,  
We say that on Earth and to us a child has been  
born...  
But now we move with unhalting pace toward the  
dark evening,  
And toward the cold lengthening shadow,  
And quick we avert our fearful eyes from the strange  
event,  
The burial and the bourne...  
That leaving home: the end... Death...

Are these then birth and death?  
Does the cut of a cord bring life and dust to dust  
expunge it?  
If so, what are we then, we dead?

For, in the cities,  
And dark on the lonely farms, and waifs on the ocean,  
As a harrying of wind, as an eddying of dust,

## We Dead

We dead, in our soft shining bodies that are combed  
and are kissed,  
Are ghosts fleeing from the inescapable hell of our-  
selves . . .

We are even as beetles skating over the waters of our  
own darkness,  
Even as beetles, darting and restless,  
But the depths dark and void . . .

We have found no peace, no peace: though our en-  
gines are crafty:  
What avail wings to the flier in the skies  
While his dead soul like an anchor drags on the Earth?  
And what avails lightning darting a man's voice, linking  
the cities,  
While in the booth he is the same varnished clod,  
And his soul flies not after?  
And what avails it that the body of man has waxed  
mammoth  
Limbed with the lightning and the steam,  
While his spirit remains a torment and a trifle,  
And gaining the world, profits nothing?

Self-murdered, self-slain, the dead cumber the Earth . . .  
And how did they die?

A boy was born in the pouring radiance of creative  
magic:  
And with pulses of music he was born . . .

### **We Dead**

---

Of himself he might have been shaping a song-wingéd  
poet...

But he was afraid...

He feared the gaunt garret of starvation and the lonely  
years in his soul's desert,

And he feared to be a jest and a fool before his  
friends...

Now he clerks, the slave...

And the magic is slimed with disastrous opiates of the  
Night.

A girl was bathed with the lissome beauty of the seeker  
of love,

The call of the animals one to another in the Spring,  
The desire of the captive woman in her heart, as she  
ran and leaped on the hills;

But the imprisoned beast's cry terrified her as she  
looked out over the love-quiet of the modern  
world...

Yet she desired to take this man-lure and release it  
into loveliness,

Become a dancer, lulling with witchcraft of her young  
body the fevered world...

But no, her mother spied here a wickedness...

Shamefully she submitted, making a smouldering in-  
ferno of the hidden Nymph in her soul,  
And so died.

A woman was made body and heart for the beautiful  
love-life...

## We Dead

But of the mother-miracle,  
How the cry of a troubled child whitens the red pas-  
sions,  
She did not know . . .  
Fear of poverty corrupted her: she chose a fool that  
her heart hated,  
And now through him no release for her native pas-  
sions,  
But only a spending of her loathsome fury on adorn-  
ment and luxury . . .  
Ah, dead glory! and the heart sick with betrayal!

There is no grace for the dead, save to be born again:  
Engines shall not drag us from the grave,  
Nor wine nor meat revive us.

For our thirst is a thirst no liquor can reach nor slake,  
And our hunger a hunger by no bread filled . . .  
The waters we crave bubble up from the springs of life,  
And the bread we would break comes down from  
invisible hands.

We dead! awake!  
Kiss the belovéd past goodby,  
Go leave the love-house of the betrayéd self,  
And through the dark of birth go and enter the soul's  
bleak weather . . .  
And I, I will not stay dead, though the dead cling to me,  
I will put away the kisses and the soft embraces and  
the walls that encompass me,

## **We Dead**

---

And out of this womb I will surely move to the world  
of my spirit . . .

I will lose my life to find it, as of old,  
Yea, I will turn from the life-lie I lived to the truth I  
was wrought for,  
And I will take the creator within, sower of the seed  
of the race,  
And make him a god, shaper of civilization . . .

Now on my soul's imperious surge,  
Taking the risk, as of death, and in deepening twilight,  
I ride on the darkening flood and go out on the waters  
Till over the tide comes music, till over the tide the  
breath

Of the song of my far-off soul is wafted and blown,  
Murmuring commandments . . .

Storm and darkness! I am drowned in the torrent!  
I am moving forth irrevocably from the sheltering  
womb!

I am naked and little!  
Oh, cold of the world, and lights blinding, and space  
terrifying!

Now my cry goes up and the wailing of my helpless  
soul:  
Mother, my mother!

Lo, then, the mother eternal!

### **We Dead**

---

In my opening soul the footfall of her fleeting tread,  
And the song of her voice piercing and sweet with  
    love of me,  
And the enwinding of her arms and adoring of her  
    breath,  
And the milk of her plenty!  
Oh, Life, of which I am part; Life, from the depths of  
    the heavens,  
That ascended like a water-spring into David of Asia  
    on the eastern hills in the night,  
That came like a noose of golden shadow on Joan in  
    the orchard,  
That gathers all life: the binding of brothers into  
    sheaves:  
That of old, kneelers in the dust  
Named, glorying: Allah, Jehovah, God.



II

WE LIVING



## THE MAN SPEAKS

*From "The Beloved"*

YOU and I in the night, spied on by stars . . .  
You and I in the belovéd night . . .  
You and I within these walls.

A breath from the sea is kissing the housetops of the  
city,  
Kissing the roofs,  
And dying into silence.

Earth and stars are in a trance,  
They dream of passion, but cannot break their sleep.  
They pass into us, and we are their passion, we are  
their madness,  
So shaped that we can kiss and clasp . . .  
One kiss, then death, the miracle being spent.

Watchman, what of the night?  
Sleep and birth! Toil and death!  
Now the light of the topmost tower winks red and  
ceases:  
Now the lonely car echoes afar off . . .  
Helen looked over the wine-dark seas of Greece, and  
she was young.

### **The Man Speaks**

---

But not younger than we, touching each other, while  
dawn delays . . .

Dare we betray this moment?  
Dare we die, missing this fire?  
Whither goes massive Earth tonight, flying with the  
stars down eternity?  
We are alive: we are for each other.

## THE WOMAN SPEAKS

*From "The Beloved"*

O H, MY being, opening into the dazzle of sunrise!  
Where are you blowing me, trumpets?  
What blast of music am I, striding the wind?

I took the hand of my belovéd, and I was satisfied.  
I kissed his lips, and the stone of my heart became  
a song.  
I kissed his lips, and was born again.

Love, now I know thee!  
I have looked into thine eyes, Splendor:  
I have kissed thy lips, golden boy . . .

Bear me to the ends of the earth,  
Drown me in oceans,  
Crush me beneath granite mountains:  
I give all, I render myself up,  
O thou, that art the breath of life: the whisper on the  
deeps.

## BELOVED

### LOVE:

To approach you with the touch the sculptor  
gives his clay,

Subdued, inspired:

To catch in the radiance of my heart the purity of yours,  
White breathless fires:

To let the still sea of song in my spirit move toward its  
shore, your soul,

With dying music: (Oh, hear me, adored one!)

### Love:

To watch as one watches the face of the beloved  
coming out of death,

Every wavering of your lashes:

To feel each fluctuation of your yearning and your  
desire,

And meet it with caresses:

To enfold you gently until your whole soul slides into  
mine,

Conquering me with submission: (Adored one, hear  
me!)

### Love:

To meet the dawn together and the widening light,

**Beloved**

---

Seas in our hearts sounding,  
To take from a kiss the glory of a dawn in our spirits,  
And the arousal to living:  
To rise from each other's arms magnified and mighty,  
Heroic and human: (Adored one, hear me!)

Such may our love be: such be our passion, beloved.

## ANNIE

IN THE fragrance of her simple heart I still bathe myself:

For Annie was a girl of the people,  
With eyes of the clearest brown,  
And a voice low and sweet.

Her blushes were quick as her tears:  
And the caress of her hand, and the "ah!" as she sighed,  
Thinking she had offended,  
Were as echoes of moonlit waters on a far shore . . .

Something breathed from her as deep of the womanly as the Earth itself:  
I dreamt of hay in the barn, and slopes of daisies beside the road,  
And the kitchen scoured and shining, and the hearth gleaming in the night:  
Something so old and new, so common and magic:  
For Annie was a girl of the people,  
A darling of the Earth.

She said: "I am lonely, too . . .  
I live in a room by myself and work in the day . . .

## Annie

---

Three months back my mother died, leaving me  
lonely . . . ”

“Ah,” she said, “your brown eyes now!” And she  
laughed, and we kissed . . .  
And over her face came a glow as her eyes met mine,  
And her deep glance pierced me . . .

“Soon as you’re gone,” she said, “you’ll be forgetting  
me:  
And you’ll take to the next woman you ever meet,  
And you’ll kiss her like you kiss me . . .  
But I’ll not be forgetting you ever in my life:  
And how we met, and came up the stoop, and kissed  
behind the door . . . ”

“So,” she sighed, holding me close by the hand,  
“Go now: what’ll I think of myself letting you kiss me?  
It’s my fault, sure: I’d never be blaming you . . .  
Goodnight,” she sighed, and we kissed, and she  
watched me go.

Out of the Earth spring natural simple flowers:  
Out of the people come simple natural women:  
Annie, one of the sweetest.

## THE LOVE-HOUR

WHERE may she of the hall bedroom hold the  
love-hour?

In what sweet privacy find her soul before the face of  
the belovéd?

And the kiss that lifts her from the noise of the shop,  
And the bitter carelessness of the streets?

Neither is there garden nor secret parlor for her:  
And cruel winter has spoiled the shores of the sea;  
The benches in the park are laden with melting snow,  
And the bedroom forbidden . . .

But ah, the love of a woman! She will not be cheated!  
Up the stoop she went to the vestibule of the house,  
And beckoned to me to come to that darkness of  
doors:  
Here in a crevice of the public city the love-hour was  
spent . . .

Outside rumbled the cars between drifts of the gas-lit  
snow,  
And the footsteps fell of the wanderers in the night . . .  
Within, the dark house slept . . .

### The Love-Hour

---

But we, in our little cave, stood, and saw in the gleaming dark  
Shine of each other's eyes, and the flutter of wisps of hair,  
And our words were breathlessly sweet, and our kisses silent . . .

Where is there rose-garden,  
Where is there balcony among the cedars and pines,  
Where is there moonlit clearing in the dumb wilderness,  
Enchanted as this doorway, dark in the glare of the city?

## A WOMAN FOR THE ADVENTURE

I WANT a woman for the adventure:  
And my demands are monstrous, never to be  
met...

For I want first the body that slopes like a wave of the  
sea toward my senses:  
And whose desire is for me, my least kiss fetching the  
answering glow:  
And whose face, pensive in the twilight, sends my mind  
back to the legend of women,  
And whose coming and going is as the footfall of the  
wind on a summer's night,  
And whose words drop between pauses of music gentle  
and piercing,  
And who gives herself in the wish of children.

But that is not all: oh, not more than a fragment of  
what I demand:  
I want her to be the mother of my hours of weakness:  
Quick will be the intuition searching to my need and  
my cry:  
Gentle the healing of those caressing hands, breath of  
that soothing voice:  
Deep will be the love that makes me whole again.

## **A Woman For The Adventure**

---

And yet more I ask: insatiate man that I am:  
I want the comrade free and supple-hearted as a man,  
Who puts on her boots and her khaki and goes out  
with me on the holiday morning,  
And away we tramp on a lark, young vagrants both:  
And she will swim, and sleep on the ground, and climb  
up the mountains,  
Yea, she will up, at a moment's notice, and be off to  
strange cities,  
And take the peril and the joy of strange lands and  
strange people.  
And she will be willing to live without me when she  
sends me off on some journey.

Yet demand worst of all: and paradox quaint:  
As I stand father to the children of her body,  
I want the woman who stands father to the children  
of my spirit:  
Yea, she who comes to her fulfillment through my  
vision and my works:  
She who impregnates my soul with seed of her spirit,  
Until there grows the life that through mighty travail  
is born:  
Our works: our child!

Ah, you will say: not a woman, but a goddess I  
demand:  
Ah, you will tell me I am monstrous, and so will not  
find her:

### **A Woman For The Adventure**

Yet, out with the truth of it! Such are the cravings of  
men:  
Such the woman I want for the adventure!

## WHEN A WOMAN IS WANTED

WHEN a woman is wanted,  
What is the printed page, that I can idle over  
it,  
And what the street, that I can wander it through?

The kiss in imagination is but whiskey . . .  
It makes the thirst rage . . .  
The dream of caresses and whispering love is but a  
beckoner forth from the prison-cell . . .

I want, not an image, but flesh and blood,  
Not words in a book, but words that come living from  
human lips,  
Not an exquisite description, but a raw sight actual  
and near . . .  
Not an aching armful of air, but a crowded armful of  
resisting and surrendering woman . . .  
Lips that my own can be pressed against in strong kisses,  
Hair to fall down on my shoulders and tease me with  
its odour of sun-warmed pine-needles,  
Eyes that can light and dim, fluctuating to the words  
and glances I send her . . .  
Oh, one here, now, close to me, mine, as I hers.

### **When A Woman Is Wanted**

How can I conjure you up from the millions in this  
city?

Somewhere you sit, dreaming, and empty, and sad . . .

Oh, how many thousands like myself brood in their  
lonely rooms and wish?

Girls and youths parted by narrow walls?

And who shall go seeking and who shall be found  
tonight?

## FOLK-HUNGER

**F**IERCE hunger has come upon me,  
And neither meat nor wine can stay me . . .  
I am starved for men and women.

I want to go where the crowd is thickest,  
Where the spot-light man colors the graceful favorite  
on the stage with green, then gold, then violet . . .  
Where the audience roars at the jocose comedian and  
the strong stout woman . . .  
Where I will be accepted, not by the Earth, but by my  
fellows.  
Sinking back into rough good commonness, just a  
laugher and idler myself,  
Warming the hands and heart of my soul at the  
blazing hearth of the people . . .

Tomorrow, business with the lordly Earth,  
Sessions with my Self in aching privacy . . .  
Tonight, crowds, lights, gayety,  
The cockles of my heart roasted as crisp as nuts,  
And my lung-bellows roaring in the jolly brotherhood  
of the world.

## ON THE WAY TO HELL

I AM so happy these days  
That beyond a doubt I shall soon be booted out of  
heaven!

Long was the fall of Satan  
And the landing dull and unpleasant.

Yet:  
I lie and laugh at life:  
I cannot get out of bed, for very delight:  
And I say: Though you wait for me, Hell,  
I shall laugh all the way to your gates.

### THE BAKERY WAITRESS

WHAT face lifts, so perfect in profile?  
Who speaks to the young men at the table?  
Is it Minerva slipped from her marble?

But what do the young men see?  
One calls: "Hey! kid! butter-cakes and coffee!"

Curious, how very blind these eaters can be!



### IN TALK WITH A PROSTITUTE

I AM no sorrier for you than I am for myself:  
We are both human beings . . .  
Alas! both of us have come through the gates of the  
dark  
And thither return . . .  
Why should we pity each other here in the night?

### THE CUP OF DEW

**L**ATE, and lonely, and faint for sleep,  
I yet will pause and have silence,  
That the thirsty one, my soul,  
May open to the night  
And drink the dew . . .

I know that the day was wasted, many-tongued.  
In noise and dust I stifled:  
Over me passed a wind of words, and the world reeled.

But now I am alone . . .  
Now space, and silence, and my body and I  
Bathed in belovéd night . . .

Dew of the stars and of the ether and earth,  
Dew of my soul,  
Fall into the cup of my beseeching hands,  
That I may put thee to my lips  
And drink the waters of great healing.

### THE LONELY CHILD

**D**O YOU think, my boy, that when I put my arms  
around you,  
To still your fears,  
That it is I that conquer the dark and the lonely night?

My arms seem to wrap love about you,  
As your little heart fluttering at my breast  
Throbs love through me . . .

But, dear one, it is not your father:  
Other arms are about you, drawing you near,  
And drawing the Earth near, and the Night near,  
And your father near . . .

Some day you shall lie alone at nights,  
As now your father lies:  
And in those arms, as a leaf fallen on a tranquil stream,  
Drift into dreams and healing sleep.

### NOT OVERLOOKED

THOUGH I am little as all little things,  
Though the stars that pass over my tininess are  
as the sands of the sea,  
Though the garment of the night was made for a sky-  
giant and does not fit me,  
Though even in a city of men I am as nothing,  
Yet at times the gift of life is almost more than I can  
bear . . .  
I laugh with joyousness: the morning is a blithe holiday:  
And in the overrunning of my hardy bliss praise rises  
for the very breath I breathe.

How soaked the universe is with life:  
Not a cranny but is drenched:  
Ah, not even I was overlooked!

### THE NEW BABE

THE BABE is the beautifully cunning dust that desires  
and breathes,  
And through the soft pink of his body sing limpid sweet  
tides of life,  
And at the light he is staring with wide blue eyes,  
unquestioning.

Oh, unawakened wonder! unopened blossom!  
There I leaned, even so in my marvelous flesh,  
But I and this body of mine were also as a pellet of dust  
Dropped into gulfs of bathing light;  
I, flower, drenched in the sunlight of the spirit,  
In the spacious morning of the soul . . .

Divine is the unfolding and wonderful the opening  
petals  
Of the babe in the storm and sun of the nourishing  
years.

### HAD I THE WINGS

A H, HAD I the wings now,  
Wings of the mounting condor to clear the  
clouds,  
Clear the heavy clouds and soar to the day-dying sun,  
To the sun, beyond these streets,  
To the sun, beyond this lash of the winter rains . . .

But the day lags, binding me:  
The day lags and my pent-up heart beats at its bars,  
At its prison-bars beats, captive and dark.  
Ah, had I the fire now, had I the joy now, had I the  
wings now  
To clear the clouds of my rain-swept soul,  
And soar in the heavens, sun-bathed.

## THE BODY

BODY, whence come mind and soul?

“Ah,” said the Body, “from me:  
I am a tree, and mind and soul are the fruit . . .  
Ages of fecund weather and nourishing dark experience,  
And the strong sun of love and hate,  
And rain of gray adversity,  
Have begotten at last, you, loved wonder immortal!”

If this be so, my body,  
I shall despise you no longer: but revere you and watch  
over you:  
Flood-gate of the race: and shores of my sea of spirit.

## THE SUN-CHILDREN

FAIR from the sun over the ages and the spaces of  
the sky,  
We children have come...  
Far from the sun by strange spirals, and long trances  
and struggles,  
When we lay a seed in the mud of a steaming Earth,  
When we swam in the waters of hushed creation,  
When we crawled out and dwelt on the land, in the  
grasses and thickets,  
When we swung from the trees of the jungle,  
When at last we arose and stepped forth on the  
immense pilgrimage of man...  
None may count even by millions the ages  
Since far from the sun  
And over the spaces and whirled in the skies,  
We children have come.

Whence, our yearning back,  
Our yearning for the sun that at dusk sinks into the  
womb of the waters,  
And at morn is born from the bath of the eastern  
sea...

### **The Sun-Children**

---

Our yearning for the peace and stillness of the sky  
before the Earth was conceived,  
Our yearning for the mother in the heavens and we but  
a flake of her living fires.

## SUN, WITH A MILLION EYES

SUN, with a million eyes: spyer of every window  
toward the east.

Sun, that scorches our faces.

Sun: light and fire . . .

The flame you jet begets life:  
All has risen from sun-fire . . .

I too was sun-fire . . .

The sun is in me: I jet him forth into a new genera-  
tion: into speech, love, labor.

The sun rises and sets, and then arises again.  
I rise and set, and my child rises again.

Thy fires in a woman and in a man draw one to the  
other:

In thy radiance we behold each other,  
Or when the moon snatches handfuls of thy glory  
across the night

And spills thy stolen beams upon the city,  
There do we see but wanly one another.

## ONE FLESH

I F MARRIAGE is to be one flesh, this twain made one,  
Then I am married to the multitudinous world:  
I have passed through the hills and the sea, and they  
through me:  
Star-light and sun-light have drenched me, nestling  
under my skin:  
Yea, I have eaten of the sun when I have eaten of the  
fruits of the field:  
And I have drunk deep of the ocean . . .

All parts of my body have been elsewhere:  
In other people: or in the grasses: or in the cow and  
tiger:  
Continually the stars rain their rays into the meadows  
whereof I taste:  
I am a meeting place for the tides of the waters of the  
world . . .

No wonder then I feel so at home:  
That love goes from me to all creation:  
I am only loving myself.

## AT HOME

THE world is wild,  
And it is a stormy world—how the stars burn!  
How the sea rages!

Every atom is fighting for itself: in tempest and fire!  
Tameless and wild!

But I too am wild: real child of this gypsy Mother . . .  
And so at home, at home in the blast of the embattled  
hours . . .

## I COULD WRITE THE PSALMS AGAIN

I COULD write the psalms again,  
I could raise on high a voice of thanksgiving,  
I could pace the eastern hills and bid the gates lift,  
Bid the gates lift that usher the dawn of the spirit . . .  
For my joy is the joy unbidden, welling from the heart,  
The joy of the Life that springs of itself from the  
inmost recesses  
When in still loneliness self meets with self.

## PRAISE

**W**HAT song shall I sing to the heavens?  
My heart is bounding with music:  
I want to pour out my praise to the everlasting heights:  
For the gift of life is apparent: as with wings I am lifted:  
And the love of my heart goes forth to the ends of the  
Earth,  
And I gather the folk in my arms, and for marvel of  
life  
Want to chant to the heavens praise for the gift and  
the glory.

## DANCERS

I HAVE a notion tonight, that the Earth and I, locked  
in each other's arms,  
Are dancing madly through the skies  
Overcome with the sublimity of life,  
While those whirling dervishes, the speedy suns,  
Pause to behold us . . .

## WASHINGTON SQUARE

**S**TARLESS and still . . .  
Who stopped this heart?  
Who bound this city in a trance?

With open eyes the sleeping houses stare at the Park:  
And among nude boughs the slumbering hanging  
moons are gazing:  
And somnambulant drops of melting snow glide from  
the roofs and patter on the pave . . .  
I in a dream draw the echoes of my footfall silvery  
sharp . . .

Sleep-walking city!  
Who are the wide-eyed prowlers in the night?  
What nightmare-riden cars move through their own  
far thunder?  
What living death of the wind rises, crackling the  
drowsy twigs?

In the enchantment of the ebb of life,  
In the miracle of millions stretched in their rooms  
unconscious and breathing,  
In the sleep of the broadcast people,

## Washington Square

In the multitude of dreams rising from the houses,  
I pause, frozen in a spell.

We sleep in the eternal arms of night:  
We give ourselves, in the heart of peril,  
To sheer unconsciousness:  
Silently sliding through space, the huge globe turns.

I cannot go:  
I dream that behind a window one wakes, a woman:  
She is thinking of me.

## SKY-LOVER

**S**KY-LOVER!  
Embracer of the hiving stars!  
The swarms of golden bees!  
I feel the strength of thine ancient arms  
And the power of thy going forth through endless  
night.

In the gross darkness thou hast spun a widening spiral  
of light,  
Moons, stars and glowing suns:  
But through these thou goest forth into the unadven-  
tured abysses,  
Chaos unconquered,  
We going with thee.

### THE FLOCKS

**O**N A DOWNY feather of the dove, Earth, I lie:  
The bird is flying down eternity.

Far out, and far under and over, the flocks of stars are  
flying as in the autumn winds . . .  
Whither are they winging? to what nests in what  
radiant South?  
And what echoes of their songs come to me,  
And who is the gentle master of the homing birds?

## THE TREE

**H**E SANG as if the heavens held only two things:  
God and himself.

Was his voice heard as the roving Spirit leaned toward  
the Tree of the Skies  
And parted the leaves of the stars,  
And peered through at the tiny green blossom, the  
Earth,  
And on Earth, the little singer, standing and praising  
the Lord?

Yet here I am: the petal of earth swaying in an ocean  
of far star-leaves:  
Yet here I am, living, aware, and singing with loud full  
voice.

## **Zotting**

### **BOOKS**

*ONLY on the days when my life has ebbed  
Do I feel the need of books to renew me . . .  
But on the days when I am quick and pouring with life,  
I turn to the book of the world at whatever page I happen  
to open it,  
And read what never yet was told in ink.*

### **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

*When I get there, once I told myself,  
The fight will be over.  
  
But when I got there, to my amazement,  
The fight was not over . . .  
And I see now it will never be over, even in death.*

## Fottings

### *EXILE*

*You cannot exile me :  
Wherever you send me, my dear old self goes along.  
Carrying on his back the bag in which all the ages since  
creation have thrown their winnings,  
So that he staggers under riches . . .  
How then can you exile me ?*

### *THE EDGE OF THE POSSIBLE*

*Vast is the city, concealing fires behind its walls, its  
streets and its faces :  
So for the adventure I choose the spacious night,  
And go forth marvelling at what may happen :  
Tripping along, breathless, on the edge of the possible.*

## 3ottings

### **THE BAFFLED ONE**

*NOT until you find a meaning in yourself, will you  
find a meaning in the world.  
That is what ails you . . .  
Your inner confusion you perceive all about you,  
Once you get purpose into your life, and you will see it in  
all life.*

## RENEWAL

I RENEWED some forgotten friendships:  
My old friend, the sky, and my comrade, the  
open air:  
My dear cronies, the hills, and my lover, the sea:  
I went out and we had an afternoon of it together.

They gave me tokens:  
You may taste the sea on my cheeks, and the fragrance  
of the hills is in my hair:  
And the tan on my face is a memento of the friendly  
sky.

## THE ADORED ONE

### I

*(To Her of the Many  
Films)*

**Y**OUR smile is very sweet: yet it baffles me:  
Your brown eyes are large and clear: yet the  
woman who peers through them is mys-  
terious.

Though your talk flows in melody, winged with thought,  
Though you seem so young, yet so quaintly wise,  
You are deep, you are subtle, girl-faced woman!

Dove and serpent, is it?  
Much am I baffled!

## THE ADORED ONE

### II

**B**E WHAT you are: all women in one:  
Be the coarse fool, and the mean and petty  
complainer!  
Be the slave, be the courtesan!  
Be the haughty ruler of hearts, and the cruel strong  
empress!

Be also sweet, gentle, gracious:  
The lovely child, and the wistful seeker after affection:  
The calm woman, deep in brooding wisdom:  
The healthy comrade, free and fleet-footed:  
The watchful mother, with wings spread out for the  
loved one!

All that you hide mars what you reveal:  
Be what you are, sure, various, strong:  
Baffle us no longer: you are only baffling yourself.

## THE ADORED ONE

### III

YOU are proud and strong, lion-hearted girl:  
But do you know what love is?

You are quick with the colors of beauty, star-gleaming  
girl:  
But do you know what passion is?

Oh, the skies of Spring are here:  
Where is a mate for the moon-warm darkness?  
Crickets shall shrill in the grass as you walk alone.

What is the beauty of the lilies when no sun floods  
them?  
They die, adorable one, they die in the grasses!  
Do not turn away from the splendid shining of love:  
But take your pride and your strength and with your  
two hands cast them in the dust:  
Give up to love, as in death, to be born again:  
You will come back radiant, you will come back bear-  
ing the sunrise,  
Filling the light of the world with the light of your eyes.

## THE ADORED ONE

### IV

YOU play the queen:  
But I remember a simple girl singing in the dairy:  
Men were tamed by her sweetness.

You crown your hair with paste:  
Have you forgotten the radiance of your undrugged  
eyes,  
And the quickness of your smile?

I only say: Be yourself . . .  
What in your play has reached down into the crater  
of your human heart,  
Or walked the sun-clear peaks of your spirit?  
Be demon: be angel: oh, be woman!  
Queenship is but a garment hiding your glory:  
Crowns but muffle the night-dream of your hair.

## THE ADORED ONE

### V

H AVE you kissed that kiss that draws open the  
door of life,  
Loosening the floods, till your body sings with strong  
joy?

Do you know the tremor of the spirit that rises on a  
glance and a touch  
And braids the stars in your hair?

Do you come shining to work in the gray morning  
Because your lips are dewy with the imprint of a kiss?

Oh, glowing one, you walk in emptiness:  
You distrust and despise yourself and the world of men:  
In your triumph you taste defeat: and in your glory  
vanity:  
Go and know love, the giver of victories.

## THE ADORED ONE

### VI

W HOSE adored one is this? For her beauty walks  
on light to the ends of the Earth:  
The Australian and Spaniard must sigh at a glance  
of her face.

Many bring gifts to you, kneeling in the dust before  
your loveliness:  
Must I come, too?  
Ah, no! ah, no!

I will stand before you: my eyes a little higher than  
your eyes:  
I will demand tribute of you,  
Even the tribute I bring:  
Yourself for myself: equal and free.

If you want worshippers, take these secret thirsters  
after your beauty...  
The honey they bring is bitter...  
But if you want love, you can only get what you give:  
You too must adore the belovéd, and kneel down your-  
self when he kneels.

## FRIENDS

**N**OW the day dies, and the workers trudge home-  
ward:  
They pass my window:  
I see a few lights twinkling in the tall buildings, as if the  
evening star were reflected . . .  
What hands are emptying the glowing urn of peace on  
the dark-wayed city?

My friend and I sat smoking in the little room:  
Lightly we took the ball of the Earth and tossed it in  
talk to one another:  
Unwitting the generation about us was held up to our  
probing:  
Our hearts and minds were glowing urns of unthink-  
able riches which we poured for each other.

Is the evening so calm and tender because it has let go  
its full floods, giving love in its radiance?  
As the evening were my friend and I:  
We parted sure of each other: peace was upon us and  
serene love.

### AS TO BEING MADE A FOOL OF

**T**HAT bothered you, didn't it?  
That prevented you from entering into strange  
adventures,  
Especially with women . . .

After all, however, it is not so bad:  
If that be the price of experience  
Then I must pay it:  
For to be laughed at, and to play the fool  
Is cheap, by all odds, in exchange for the gift of life.

## THE WRITER OF MANY BOOKS

THE WRITER of many books was weary:  
“Enough of ink!” said he, “Enough of words!  
Would I were a builder of bridges or a breaker of  
stones . . .  
Then at least something real were done . . .”

Out on a lonely farm in Montana, at the close of day,  
The woman brooding toward insanity,  
Lit a lamp, and looked in his book: and the tears came:  
And the ice-pack round her heart melted down in a  
torrent . . .  
Blessed release!

Far in Texas a tubercular boy was plotting a marriage,  
But he read the tale, and his heart broke in his  
breast . . .  
“I shall not send my blight on the unborn babe,”  
So he wrote the author,  
“No: I am off to Arizona tomorrow.”

In a New York hall room a girl was dreaming of suicide,  
She read his words, and as to a call of trumpets her  
soul rose and went forth . . .

### **The Writer Of Many Books**

---

A seed so small that the eye misses it  
Starts in the womb the growth of a human child . . .  
Ye that scatter the seed of words, scorn not the sowing,  
Nor the Master that sent ye out in the barren fields.

## THE MIGHTY HOUR

THESE ARE the days of immense and solitary  
strength:  
When to be alone is no hardship  
And to go forth among men is a satisfying joy . . .

For I have found myself:  
I have ceased to be ashamed of the things I cannot do  
And have become proud of the things I can do:  
I have accepted simple living and endless labor:  
I have accepted peril and risk all around me,  
And I have become patient with the world and with  
my own faltering.

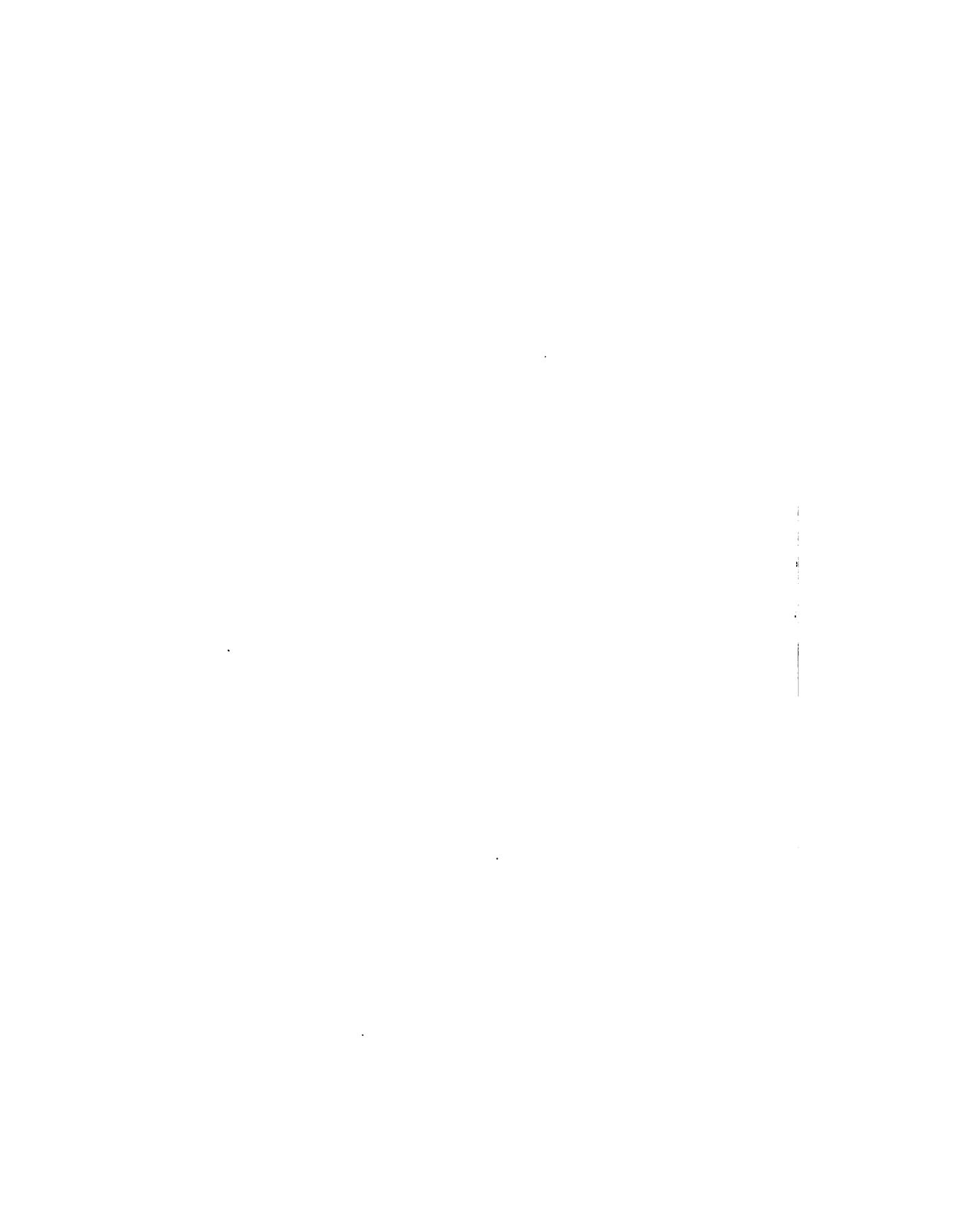
I live with this moment, and suck out its particular  
essence,  
Whether it be the bakery lunchroom and the shopgirls  
about me,  
Whether it be some poor dull person stuffed with rich  
eating,  
Whether it be stars over the snow and the sharp winds  
of winter,  
Or whether it be my narrow room, and unbusied  
loneliness . . .

### **The Mighty Hour**

---

So living, I give myself to the purpose of the Earth . . .  
I let the Mother put forth through me as she puts forth  
    through the least bud on her breast,  
I open the way for the rise of that sap and shape it for  
    men and women . . .  
And so I am what I was born for: and peace comes in  
    so being:  
And strength . . .  
For so Earth herself is for me, and even the stars in  
    their courses . . .

Is this egotism?  
Shall tomorrow break me in the dust till my cry goes up  
    to the heavens?  
Shall a bitter cup come to my lips after this splendor?  
Even so . . .  
I yet shall know what is possible in the mighty hour,  
I yet shall know that a gaint sleeps in my heart,  
And that after the despoiled days have gone over  
Again I shall be myself and live in that victory.



III

**WE UNBORN**



### THE MOTHER

WHAT DOES the woman sing to the love-seed  
under her heart?

“Oh, my beloved, unborn,  
Oh, lips in the darkness that yet shall be kissing my  
breast:  
I send my life-blood into you,  
And great love upon you:  
Hushed in the pool of the dark you blossom in me!

“Beloved! I make this charge upon you:  
When out of my littleness you come to the sudden  
vastness,  
And faces are about you, and cities, and the winds of  
the deep:  
Fear nothing, baby:  
My arms are there: my breasts: your mother meets  
you!”

Thus sings the woman: this is the song of all women:  
So sang a woman to me.

## The Mother

---

*Tides of the darkness! Cave of the midnight!  
Am I still seed?  
What life-blood flows through the Earth to me:  
What great love is upon me:  
Who sings? . . . What Mother?*

## DEATH

**T**HIS starry world, and I in it . . .  
How can I get out of it?

I go to sleep, but when I wake I am still here . . .  
All night my blood-drops circled through my body as  
the stars circle through the body of the world . . .  
All night the flame of life burned in my breast and  
brain as the stars burn in the breast and brain of  
the world . . .

And what is Death?  
It is a swing-door. I push through, coming out on the  
other side . . .  
But the other side is the world, just as this side is the  
world . . .  
There is no escape . . .

So I had best do my work now, lest I shall have to do it  
later . . .  
I had best be myself now, lest later I shall have to battle  
with the crusts upon myself,  
Lest later I shall have to begin again at the beginning,  
unlearning all my faults . . .

## **Death**

---

This was as true a hundred million years ago,  
This will be as true a hundred million years from now,  
As it is now, at this moment.

## LOOKING DOWN ON EARTH

LOOKING down on Earth,  
As from some distant heaven,  
And seeing body after body drop and the life fly from it,  
All day long and all night a host of the dead arising:  
It seemed indeed a curious life, that life:  
It seemed indeed a curious end, that death . . .

Then, here on Earth,  
I sitting at this desk in this small room,  
So thrillingly alive,  
Yet soon to meet that fine decisive moment,  
Pause in strange awe to think that what these others,  
These hosts of dead, have passed through,  
I too shall soon experience, down to the last gray detail:  
Darkness, with secret gleams of a rising twilight  
beyond . . .

Not only these others (ah, that is strange enough!)  
But I myself: all that I am,  
To pass through the black process,  
Turning away in agony from the sweetness of the sun  
and the crowds,  
Renouncing all, with bitter dread and loathing:

### **Looking Down On Earth**

---

Even as the babe in the womb, could it be conscious,  
Would pass into the mystery of the world . . .

Ah, world, art then a womb?  
Are we, the living, but the unborn children,  
And is death birth?

### THE RUNNER IN THE SKIES

WHO is the runner in the skies,  
With her blowing scarf of stars,  
And our Earth and sun hovering like bees about her  
blossoming heart?  
Her feet are on the winds, where space is deep,  
Her eyes are nebulous and veiled,  
She hurries through the night to a far lover.

## IN THE THEATER

**L**AST NIGHT in the theater  
The fleet-footed dancers bowed in the spotlight:  
Then they clasped, and invisible hands shaped them  
    like waters that never spilled:  
And at once through me rose the mists of creation:  
And I saw that chaos, the illimitable nebula of the  
    universe  
Had jetted forth this pair: the eternal pair:  
Sex: the dancers: the light-footed trippers on the Earth.

### THE SURVEYOR

**A** FANCY teases my brain:  
From the North Star the Surveyor drops his  
plumb-line,  
It unravels down to the Earth, and beyond the Earth  
through the spacious gulfs beneath . . .  
He measures the heights and depths of the heavens:  
Who shall measure the width?

### A HANDFUL OF DUST

I STOOPED to the silent Earth and lifted a handful  
of her dust . . .  
Was it a handful of humanity I held?  
Was it the crumbled and blown beauty of a woman or  
a babe?  
For over the hills of Earth blows the dust of the  
withered generations:  
And not a water-drop in the sea but was once a blood-  
drop or a tear:  
And not an atom of sap in leaf or bud but was once the  
love-sap in a human being:  
And not a lump of soil but was once the rosy curve of  
lip or breast or cheek . . .

Handful of dust, you stagger me . . .  
I did not dream the world was so full of the dead:  
And the air I breathe so rich with the bewildering past:  
Kiss of what girls is on the wind?  
Whisper of what lips is in the cup of my hand?  
Cry of what deaths is in the break of the wave tossed  
by the sea?  
I am enfolded in an air of rushing wings:  
I am engulfed in clouds of love-lives gone . . .

### **A Handful of Dust**

---

Who leans yonder? Helen of Greece?  
Who walks with me? Isolde?  
The trees are shaking down the blossoms from Juliet's  
breast:  
And the bee drinks honey from the lips of David . . .

Come, girl, my comrade:  
Stand close, sun-tanned one, with your bright eyes  
lifted:  
Behold this dust . . .  
This is you: this of the Earth under our feet is you:  
Raised by what miracle? shaped by what magic?  
Breathed into by what god?

And a hundred years hence, one like myself may come,  
And stoop, and take a handful of the yielding Earth,  
And never dream that in his palm  
Lies she that laughed and ran and lived beside this sea  
On an afternoon a hundred years before . . .

Listen to the dust in this hand:  
Who is trying to speak to us?

## ASSURANCE

YEA, THERE are as many stars under the Earth as  
over the Earth . . .  
Plenty of room to roll around in has our planet . . .  
And I, at the edge of the porch,  
Hearing the crickets shrill in the star-thick armies of  
grass,  
And beholding over the spread of Earth the spread of  
the heavens . . .  
Drink this deep moment in my pilgrimage,  
With a sense of how forever I have been alive,  
With a conviction that I shall go on, ever safe, ever  
growing,  
The stars to be included in my travels,  
And the future sure before me.

### THE RISEN ONES

BEGINNING millenniums back  
We were given of the cup of the Earth to drink:  
A cup of the blood of torment and love:  
A cup set to our emerging and vanishing lips again and  
again through a million years:  
And we have waxed on agony: seed has become man.

But behold! now from the rivers of blood the prophets  
of peace lift up,  
Out of the pain rises a running and wingéd joy,  
And out of the lamentation springs a laughter!

### THE DREAMER IN ME

THE DREAMER in me keeps on dreaming though  
my lips are babbling and my eyes are watchful . . .  
I may be in the railroad terminal speaking to a friend.  
The dreamer is on a warm moist hill under the cloud-  
soft skies,  
He feels the Earth moving and smells the flowers down  
to their roots,  
He pierces the blue heavens with his wings.  
Then I look round and think, how strange:  
Stone walls: crowds: my friend and I . . .  
Yet all of us seen by the dreamer as a little blur in the  
skies,  
As a patter in immensity . . .  
Where are we? where is Earth? where are the skies?  
The dreamer shivers and laughs:  
It is so miraculous, visionary and grotesque,  
Such nonsense, this reality . . .  
Yet my friend and I go on talking as if there were  
nothing strange in it at all.

## WE UNBORN

### I

I AWAKE:  
Midnight, star-shouldered, is leaning over me.

I must to my desk, and light the lamp, and stare at the  
flesh of my hands and legs:  
Marveling to breathe and be alive.

I open the window: I lean out in the dark.

Stars! shall you answer my cry tonight?  
Earth! shall you turn to the call of your son?  
Where is the answerer? Where are the lips of the  
midnight?  
Oh, world, my belovéd, whisper to me!

Surely my love for you has been welcome in the dark-  
ness of the night:  
Surely, Mother, the asking child shall be taught:  
Though I am little in the flesh, am I not large in the  
love of my heart?

## We Unborn

---

### II

I sit at my desk:  
I take the eye of Science and spy out the endless ether  
floating with worlds,  
But of all those stars, those numberless millions beneath  
and above,  
Only the little hasty Earth under my feet.

Millions of the sprawling bodies of men clothe like  
a sea the slopes of this planet,  
But from all that naked flesh lying on the globe,  
Here do I rise, not one of them: but I,  
Myself . . .

### III

I take the wings of thought,  
Up from the Earth I soar, I scale the skies quicker than  
light,  
And the planet whirls to a moon beneath my feet,  
And drops through the gulfs, a stone,  
And dwindles to a star . . .  
Still spreads the Milky Way ages above the reach of  
my fingers,  
And all the sides of the amphitheatre of Eternity hold  
tiers on tiers of the far stars,  
And the monstrous abyss is scattered with a sowing  
of stars,

## We Unborn

---

And looping its twinkling sun, the grain of the Earth  
is shining . . .  
But there is the body I left: sitting in the narrow room:  
Writing at the desk:  
It pauses: the face lifts: the eyes stare in the lamp-  
light:  
It questions . . . it questions!

I drop:  
I am back in my room: I am at this desk:  
Tut! skies? A picture hanging on the immense walls  
of my mind:  
The Earth is a curious nugget in the palm of my hand:  
I am the sustaining and enfolding ether of the universe!

## IV

I gaze at the ash of my cigar:  
I become smaller than a pin-point: I climb inside the  
ash:  
Lo, a world immense and miraculous as the star-sown  
universe!  
I am standing in the spinning of atom-worlds,  
I am pausing in the rising and setting of innumerable  
suns,  
I am lost in the fleeing of dead gray moons in the  
dark . . .

I laugh: I flick off the ash: it scatters:  
And lo, I am still here, face to face with Self.

## **We Unborn**

---

### **V**

Ah, not that one thing is more miraculous than another,  
But that somehow, struck from this mass and motion,  
    not you nor the sun,  
But I, I am here, in the center and thick of it:  
This torch of a body with a brain shedding invisible  
    light:  
This Self, this secret cave I may retire to:  
This paradox of outer appearance and inner perception:  
This net that catches stars and people as if they were  
    fish in the infinite sea:  
This strainer wherethrough all tides of life pass, leaving  
    deposits:  
This tool working on the world: this flame burning  
    into the beings of others:  
This lover and hater casting light and shadow:  
This creature: this creator:  
This dwarf: this god:  
This is the dumb-mouthed miracle my questions are  
    shattered on!

### **VI**

With all the heavens to choose from:  
I that may have dropped once through the Milky Way,  
Sky to sky falling,  
How did I ever pick, not only the Earth,  
Poor little brown ball, ever half-dark and half-wintry,

## We Unborn

---

But that infinitesimal pair, that woman and man,  
In the quaint hill-house at the head of the rambling  
street,  
And take on—I that had measured the heavens—  
This form that now is bowed at this desk, writing this  
song of questionings?

### VII

The room swims out on space:  
And I see that the finger of greatness touches my fore-  
head:  
And that size is nothing: experience is all.

For the kiss of my belovéd shrinks night to the rift of  
her lips,  
And the death of my child darkens sun and moon in the  
firmament,  
And my heart's song turns to an echo the large music  
of the spheres,  
And my spirit's dream makes the heavens the shadow  
of my gliding feet.

### VIII

I am as a wave fleeing before the flood of the ages:  
The rush of the ocean-river pushes me on: it lifts crea-  
tively through me:  
It yet shall sweep me out into the night.

## The Unborn

---

Oh, Ocean, eddying with spindrift of stars and moons,  
Oh, Mother-Ocean, how did you beget me?

And now the voice of the Ocean rolls into song in the  
channels of my heart:

### IX

“I am the Mother:

I am the Ocean shaped of the waters of life:  
My body is the spiraling torrents of Life across Eternity:  
Out of the mouth of darkness I came pouring,  
And down through night I descended, a child of waters,  
A singing girl whose body grew hollow with the drifts  
of the suns . . .

For the nebula of my childishness was shot with dreams,  
And I eddied toward the light that opens in your mind,  
And I shaped toward the love that lies in your heart,  
And I groped toward division into millions of gods,  
The one made many . . .

“In a fury I have grown: ages but the crusts I have  
broken through:

Skies but the hollowness in the depths of my waters  
wherethrough I have sent my strength.

Suns but pods I have burst, scattering seeds of planets:  
Earth but a bud of mist that opened before my yearning  
into hills:

And the hills, mating with my love, opened out into  
seeds,

## We Unborn

And the seeds unfolded into animals,  
And the vague-brained animals blossomed into man:  
And still I grow: through you, I grow:  
You in your little room somewhere suspended in the  
sky-egg of the stars:  
That egg, the womb of your Mother!

“Son: my belovéd!  
I am the Mother:  
And though your body is hidden within me, I lift  
through you, you lift through me:  
For I am the Ocean of life dividing into millions of  
channels:  
You are one of the channels:  
Together we innumerable waters pour through the  
heavens,  
And there shall be many minglings until we grow into  
gods:  
Growing forever through torment, travail and love:  
Reaching toward the deaths that are births:  
And you are that part of me that is creative as I:  
Your will is on the reins of the stars even as mine is  
upon them:  
Created, you have become a creator.

“Son: my belovéd!  
Love death, the releaser:  
Give yourself grown to the outward-opening gates:

## We Unborn

Pass from the sun-woven littleness of the heavens  
To the spaces of my arms:  
Be born! be born! Many and many await you!"

### X

Star-shouldered midnight! Room solid about me!  
Flesh of my hand holding the pausing pen!  
How here, cooped in, shall I realize the vision?

Lo, I will bag the stars, clapping the far millions of  
them in:  
This scoop is the little womb of the Mother.

I will recede in phantasy a million years back  
And stand in the sun-fire from which I sprang,  
And swim the dark river of my life up the ages:  
That river is the flowing blood of the Mother.

I will take a string and hold one end of it on the Earth  
And one end touching the seven high Pleiades,  
And I will describe a circle around the Earth:  
This huge sphere of skies is but an egg in the body of  
the Mother.

### XI

Mother:  
Oh, thou reaching me through thy body with life-blood  
and love:

## We Unborn

heavens So deep within thee I bide: so thoroughly thou growest  
it you!" through me:  
it me! So thoroughly I grow through thee:  
on: That though the slant of infinity finds me as a mote of  
millions: flesh on the mote of a world,  
The heavens are but feeders of my growth and the  
Earth is my supper before the night of death:  
They that love me and they that hate me are thy hands  
shaping me:  
And the streets are the running track of my soul.  
  
Yea, these people are thyself and myself, Mother:  
Through a million years we have been poured through  
each other:  
Through gate after gate of the human Mothers I have  
come  
Up the alley of the ages: often a mother myself . . .  
Oh, generations, we have passed through each other!  
Oh, houses of the flesh, we have dwelt in each other,  
heart within heart!  
Oh, people, it is for this I am drawn to you with such  
unsearchable love!  
This is the mass of blended life the Mother is growing  
through.

## XII

Mother, may I not well sing the amazing song of life?

### **We Unborn**

---

Oh, may I not well lift the song of my adoration?  
This gift is too great for the heart of me so tiny and  
throbbing:  
Bear me on thy tides and pour through me into great  
and unwithheld creations and love:  
Let my lips in the darkness bear witness to thee:  
Let my works be thy works through the toil of my  
hands:  
Let me go forth in the day dawning, dropping the stars  
of thy heavens on the darkened streets:  
I am thy son, and I would have thee take joy in me:  
I am thy unborn, Mother, moving toward the morn  
of my nativity.

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